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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - CORRECTED ADDRESSING PROBLEMS

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SUBJECT: INDEPENDENT SPLM CANDIDATES CAUSE CRISIS WITHIN THE PARTY

REF: KHARTOUM 99; KHARTOUM 105; KHARTOUM 150

[¶1.](#) (SBU) Summary: The Southern People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) became embroiled in crisis following the February 22 announcement of candidates that will be the party's standard bearers in the upcoming April elections. Upon learning that they were not selected, a number of senior SPLM members decided to defy the party and run as "independents" (SPLM-I). The SPLM has tried to both cajole and threaten members back into the fold. However, this point, thirteen independents continue to contest various governorships. The SPLM remains concerned about this split in party cohesion and its effect on electoral security. End Summary.

[¶2.](#) (SBU) On February 9, ConGen and PolOff met with SPLM Deputy Secretary General Anne Itto concerning the party's "independent" candidates. At that time, there were 13 independent candidates running for gubernatorial seats for the 10 states of Southern Sudan, including three in Upper Nile State alone. Scores of other SPLM independents were running for the Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly (SSLA) and State legislatures. Although the SPLM gave them a February 13 deadline to withdraw their nomination or leave the SPLM, there had been no public withdrawals as of February 15.

[¶3.](#) (SBU) Itto explained that the nomination process had been very difficult. The SPLM political bureau (PB) received 76 SPLM nominations for the 10 gubernatorial seats and 2,800 for the 700 parliamentary seats from the State "electoral colleges." (Note: These colleges were State-led committees charged with vetting candidates against standardized criteria. However, many blame the colleges for not recommending the strongest candidates to the political bureau).

[¶4.](#) (SBU) According to Itto, the 27 members of the PB pored over the nominations, reviewed them based on the standardized criteria and finally decided through secret ballots. She said that even some of the people GoSS President Kiir supported were not selected. Itto acknowledged that the process had thrown the party into disarray. However, she maintained that it had been fair and transparent. She stated that given the numbers of nominees alone, it was inevitable that there would be a lot of unhappy people.

[¶5.](#) (SBU) Other party members have been far more critical of the nomination process. Numerous cabinet-level members of the GoSS

have told us, "we have put ourselves in a mess." Not surprisingly, GoSS VP Riek Machar was the most disparaging, terming the process a "fiasco." (Comment: This may in part be due to the fact that there were only two Nuer candidates for the 10 gubernatorial slots. The party leadership has been livid that one of the SPLM-I gubernatorial candidates is Angeline Tenny Machar, wife of the VP).

How to Sway Independents - Carrot or Stick or Both?

¶16. (SBU) Immediately following the independent candidates' announcements to contest the elections, the SPLM Secretary General, Pagan Amun was quoted as saying they would be expelled from the party. However, others urged the party try to "convince" them to stand down for the good of Southern Sudan and in the interests of party discipline. Still others argued that the party should let the independents run, and if successful, accept them back into the fold afterwards, thereby creating a stronger party in their view.

¶17. (SBU) On February 6, GoSS President Salva Kiir and SPLM Secretary General Pagan Amun convoked all the independent candidates to Juba. Itto told us that in exchange for their "party loyalty" the President and Secretary General told them they would be considered for other senior postings in the Government of Southern Sudan. Kiir and Amun also reminded them that these postings were temporary and there would likely be new elections soon following the referendum. Minister of Regional Cooperation Oyai Deng Ajak told us that Kiir had intended to meet with the independents separately, but they refused and requested to meet as one group. In the end, the SPLM gave the candidates one week to reconsider or risk party expulsion. As of February 13, the week end deadline, no candidates had publicly withdrawn their nomination.

Comment

¶18. (SBU) The SPLM remains conflicted about elections. Numerous senior-level officials have floated with us the possibility of delaying the process. In the South, the SPLM fears the party is being undermined by ethnic cleavages and personal ambition. While it is unlikely that the National Congress Party (NCP) will make serious headway against the SPLM, it is possible that these internal party divisions will cause it to lose ground vis-????-vis other Southern political parties.

¶19. (SBU) Concerning its presidential nominee, Yasir Arman, the SPLM is fully aware that it has waged a high-stakes bet. Over the past few weeks the NCP has made numerous overtures to the SPLM, pledging resolution of outstanding issues related to the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA), in exchange for "partnership" on the presidential nominee. i.e. withdrawal of Arman's candidacy. However, thus far, the SPLM is standing by Arman.

¶10. (SBU) Notwithstanding the misgivings that the some SPLM members have about elections, the electoral process has its own clear momentum. Voters have registered and candidates are

mobilized. With each passing day, elections become more likely. At this juncture a delay, or the withdrawal of Arman, would be difficult to explain to the population. We have hewed to the line that elections are an important component of the CPA and democratization process and should go forward. End Comment.

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